

Human Rights Violations by Politically Affiliated or Associated Gangs in Guyana

The grossest violations of Human Rights in Guyana during the Burnham/PNC regime were visited first upon the Amerindians in the aftermath of the Rupununi Uprising.

Unfortunately, our responses to these horrors (with a few notable exceptions) were not appropriate to the evils visited upon this vulnerable sector of the population. Then predictably, evil follows greater evil, we on the coast would have our own visitations of horrors and nightmares. And as we did, few in the world cared or came to our rescue in our moments of anguish and prolonged distress.

We have seen in the previous two letters human rights violations during the Burnham/PNC regime by: (1) the Security Forces (Police, Prison Officers, and Guyana Defense Force), and (2) the Paramilitary groups - House of Israel, as documented by the Prestigious US Library of Congress documents (Google - Library of Congress, search - Guyana). Unfortunately, the US library of Congress report (Jan, 1992) does not stop there. It mentions the reign of terror inflicted on the populace by the organized and well-armed gangs. The Document (Jan 1992) states: "**Organized Gangs**"

"From 1980 until mid-1985, organized gangs of Afro-Guyanese terrorized Indo-Guyanese communities. The groups' trademark method of entry earned them the sobriquet kick-down-the-door gangs. The gangs were fully armed and used military tactics and techniques. Gang crimes against the Indo-Guyanese included robbery and occasionally rape or murder."

"Police response to the gangs caused a civic outcry. The police routinely arrived at victims' homes hours after a crime had occurred, even if notified when the crime was in progress. The half-hearted police response encouraged the growth of the gangs, which became so bold that they began to undertake daylight operations. Fear so paralyzed Indo-Guyanese communities that women in rural areas congregated most of the day by public roads, seeking safety in numbers."

"Many analysts believed that the PNC sponsored, or at least tolerated, the kick-down-the-door gangs. Despite stringent gun control laws, gang members carried automatic weapons. One observer called the gangs "policemen by day and bandits by night." The gangs used tactics the PNC had employed against opposition parties, only on a larger scale and with even greater brutality. After Burnham's death in 1985, the gangs disappeared."

One must now ask who armed these gangs? The fact that they were using military tactics and weapons suggest that they were military trained, advised, or directed.. Where in Guyana could they have received this training? (Foreign Guyanese deportees were not yet coming to Guyana.). Or, How could the security forces not control the use of their weapons and/or personnel in illegal activities, without knowing about these incidents? So who condoned these illegal and violent actions against the civilian population - including the raping and terrorizing of women.

Unfortunately, we have not learned from our ugly past excesses. The human rights violations of Guyanese by gangs that are criminal, and/or politically endorsed/affiliated still continue in Guyana. Today we see gangs (criminal, political, and African resistance or whatever term used) that prey (rob, maim, kill) on the civilian population whenever and wherever they want. Their activities are being sanctioned/condoned by some politicians as revolutionary acts. Therefore all their illegal and heinous acts become revolutionary acts.

Robbery is now a revolutionary act! Murder is now a revolutionary act! Rape is now a revolutionary act! The victims did not know that their bodies were battlegrounds for revolutionary acts of war. The UN has categorically condemned the use of rape as a weapon of war. We hope these advocates of such heinous crimes against womanhood and humanity are denied access (visas) to any civilized society.

Is it possible that these misguided men are emulating Guyana's National Hero, (Cuffy or Kofi) a rapist? My reading tells me that there were better and /or more deserving examples (in that same revolt) for consideration of National Hero status. Maybe it is time we hear the voices of women on this issue. Who do women want as an icon of the nation? I cannot imagine what a rape victim feels every time she looks at the statute of Guyana's national icon. There are too many rape victims and too few good role models.

Guyana is a bizarre world, where the established Political Parties have Party affiliated or associated violent gangs that mete out retribution to the unprotected civilians. (Anyway, political parties with military wings are usually defined as terrorist group in the eyes of the democratic world.) Publicly, they expressed their confidence in the security forces, their actions say otherwise. That is not a vote of confidence in the security forces. (Political parties, Cultural groups, Religious groups, etc should abandon any armed/paramilitary wings. Yesteryear justifications for such activities are not acceptable today.

We have seen above that the US documents have not been kind to the PNC because the violent gangs have been associated with this party. It would be interesting to read how history will judge the current gangs and their political endorsers. Unfortunately, in the mean time the insanity continues as before. And as before, even the now current Govt. does not care, and has failed to address/solve the problems. President B. Jagdeo even refused to meet with the rape victims of these gangs in NY! How can any President of a country refused to meet with women who had been viciously and savagely raped? For them and numerous others, Guyana has become - land of robbery, rape, and murder - where criminals rule, and there is no justice.

Yours sincerely,

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